

*How Is Your  
School District  
Performing?*



*A look at*  
**Foxborough**  
Public Schools

2004–2006



EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL  
*Office of Educational Quality and Accountability*

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*The five-member Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) and its agency, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), were established by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2000 to examine public school districts in the commonwealth. The mission of the EMAC and EQA is to provide independent verification of schools' and districts' efforts to promote higher levels of academic achievement among their students, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.*

*The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Massachusetts Department of Education; the superintendent of the Foxborough Public Schools, Jan M. Norton; the school department staff; and the town officials of Foxborough.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Test scores provide one method of assessing student achievement, but a variety of factors affect student performance. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) was created to examine many of these additional factors by conducting independent audits of schools and districts across the commonwealth. The agency uses these audits to:

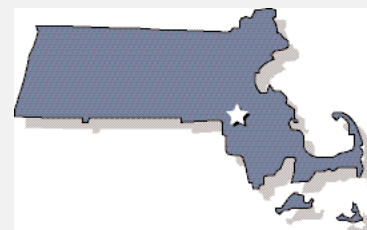
- Provide a comprehensive evaluation of each school district's performance;
- Publish annual reports on selected districts' performance;
- Monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and
- Provide the public with information that helps the state hold districts and schools, including charter schools, accountable.

In January 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Foxborough Public Schools for the period of 2004–2006. The EQA analyzed Foxborough students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and identified how students in general and in subgroups were performing. The EQA then examined critical factors that affected student performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

The review was based on documents supplied by the Foxborough Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Education; correspondence sent prior to the EQA team's site visit; interviews with representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers; numerous classroom observations; and additional documents submitted while the EQA team visited the district. The report does not take into account documents, revised data, or events that may have occurred after June 2006. However, district leaders were invited to provide more current information.

## Putting the Data in Perspective

*Foxborough, MA*



### DISTRICT

*Population:* 16,246

*Median family income:* \$78,811

*Largest sources of employment:*

Educational, health, and social services; manufacturing and retail trade

*Local government:* Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Open Town Meeting

### SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

*School committee:* 5 members

*Number of schools:* 5

*Student-teacher ratio:* 14.3 to 1

*Per Pupil Expenditures:* \$9,147

*Student enrollment:*

Total: 2,991

White: 93.6 percent

Hispanic: 1.5 percent

African-American: 2.6 percent

Asian-American: 1.8 percent

Native American: 0.2 percent

Limited English proficient:

0.6 percent

Low income: 8.0 percent

Special education: 18.5 percent

*Sources:* 2000 U.S. Census and  
Massachusetts Department of Education.

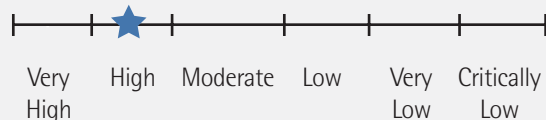
## EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

The Educational Management Audit Council accepted this report and its findings at their meeting of October 1, 2007.

## MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2006

	DISTRICT	STATE
Average Proficiency Index	86	78
English Language Arts Proficiency Index	92	84
Math Proficiency Index	79	72

## Performance Rating



The Average Proficiency Index is another way to look at MCAS scores. It is a weighted average of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, which means they have met the state's standards. A score of 100 indicates that all students are proficient. The Massachusetts DOE developed the categories presented to identify performance levels.

## HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?

## Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results

Students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 are required to take the MCAS tests each year in one or more specified subject areas, including English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE). Beginning with the class of 2003, students must pass the grade 10 math and ELA tests to graduate. Those who do not pass on the first try may retake the tests several more times.

The EQA analyzed current state and district MCAS results to determine how well district students as a whole and sub-groups of students performed compared to students throughout the commonwealth, and to the state goal of proficiency. The EQA analysis sought to answer the following five questions:

### 1. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Foxborough participated at levels which met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

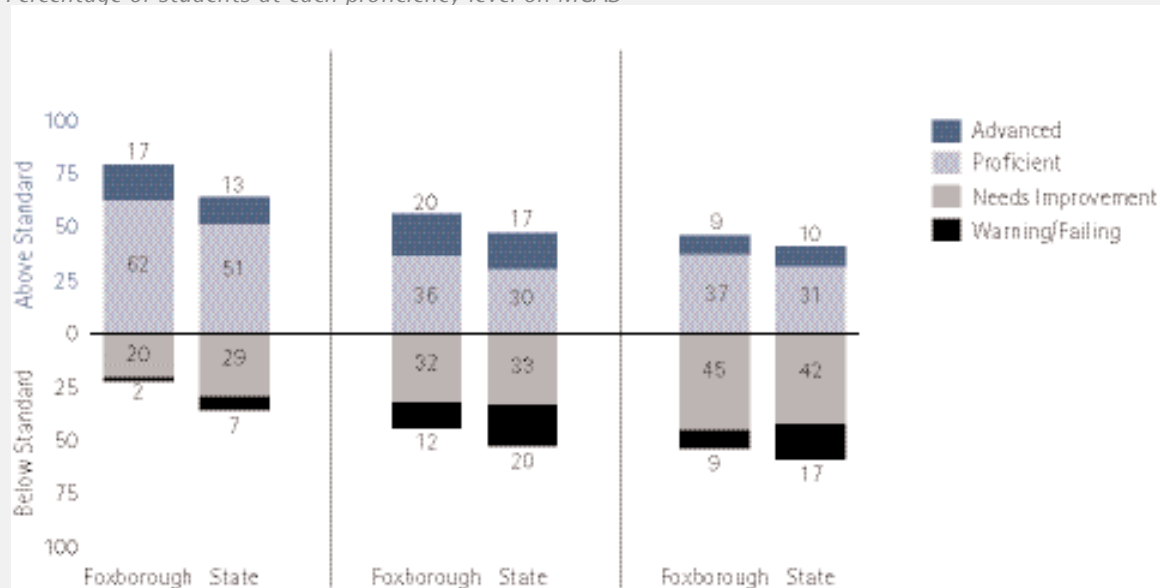
### 2. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on the MCAS examination?

On average, more than two-thirds of all students in Foxborough attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much more than that statewide. Nearly four-fifths of Foxborough students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), more than half of Foxborough students attained proficiency in math, and more than two-fifths of Foxborough students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-seven percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- Foxborough's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 86 proficiency index (PI) points, eight PI points greater than that statewide. Foxborough's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 14 PI points.
- In 2006, Foxborough's proficiency gap in ELA was eight PI points, eight points narrower

## FOXBOROUGH SCORES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES, 2006

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Foxborough's proficiency gap in math was 21 PI points in 2006, seven points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of nearly three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Foxborough's proficiency gap in STE was 22 PI points, seven PI points narrower than that statewide.

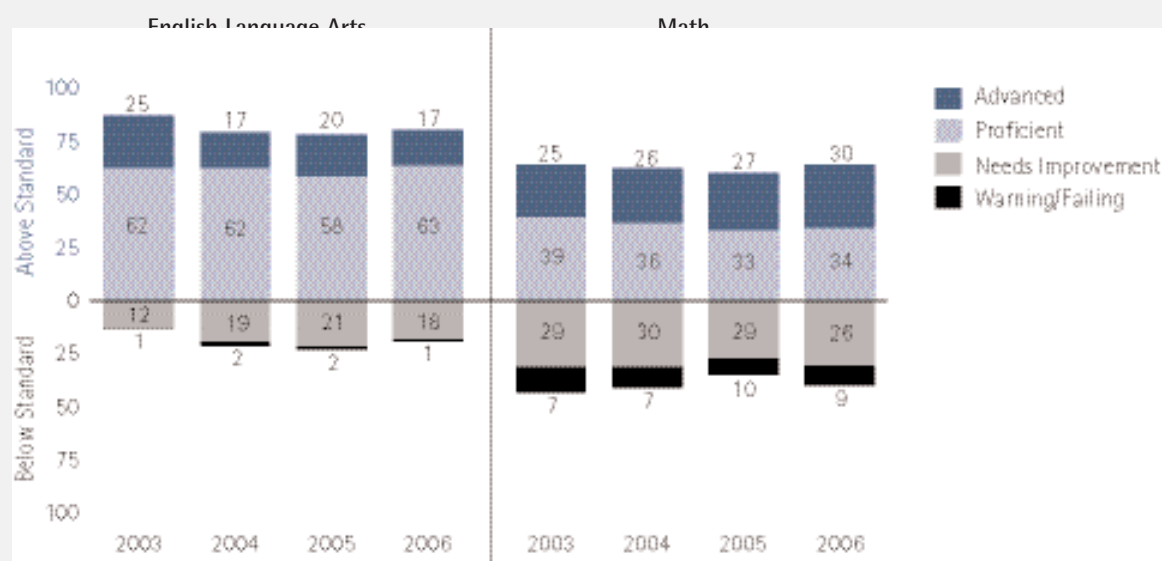
### 3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?

Between 2003 and 2006, Foxborough's MCAS performance showed a decline overall and in ELA, and was relatively flat in math and in STE.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by one percentage point between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased by two percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Foxborough widened from 11 PI points in 2003 to 13 PI points in 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003–2006, ELA performance in Foxborough decreased by two PI points.
- Math performance in Foxborough showed a decline of one PI point over this period.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Foxborough had an increase of nearly two PI points in STE performance, although the percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE declined by one percentage point.

## FOXBOROUGH ELA SCORES COMPARED TO MATH SCORES

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS

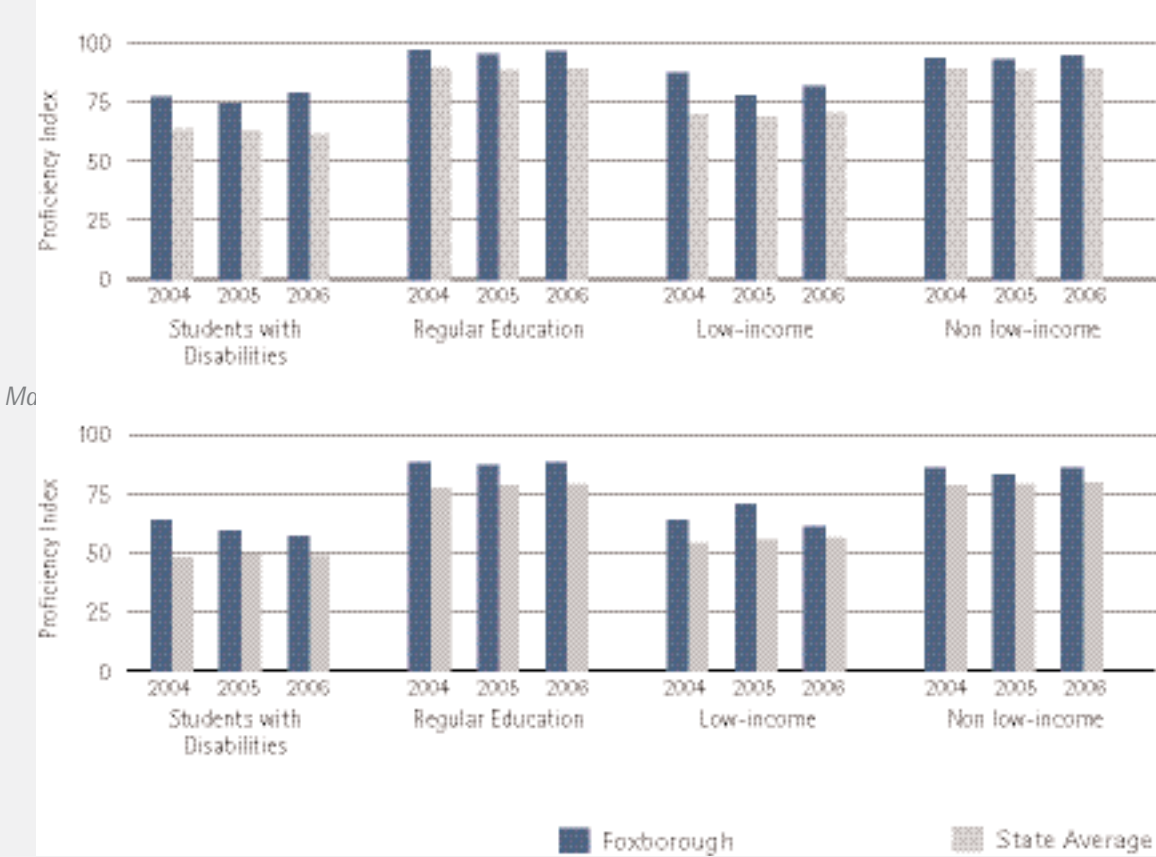


### 4. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Foxborough students. Of the eight measurable subgroups in Foxborough, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 21 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 37 PI points in math (regular education students, African-American students, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Foxborough in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). For these subgroups, two-fifths or fewer of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, more than two-thirds of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for female students was the same as the district average in math but narrower in ELA. The proficiency gap for male students in both ELA and math was wider than the district average. More than two-thirds of female students and nearly two-thirds of male students attained proficiency.

## FOXBOROUGH STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES

### English Language Arts



### 5. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?

- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 15 PI points in 2003 to 20 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 26 to 38 PI points over this period.
- In Foxborough, all subgroups of students had decreased performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, with low-income students and African-American students showing the greatest declines.
- In math, all subgroups with the exception of non low-income students had decreased performance between 2003 and 2006. African-American students also showed the greatest decline in math performance.

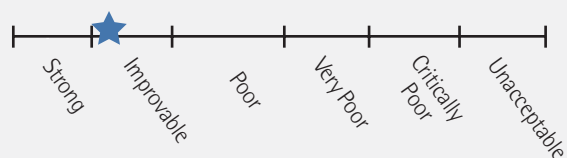


## Performance at a Glance

### Management Quality Index

The Management Quality Index is a weighted average of the district's performance on 67 indicators that measure the effectiveness of a district's management system. Foxborough received the following rating:

#### Performance Rating:



## WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

### Overall District Management

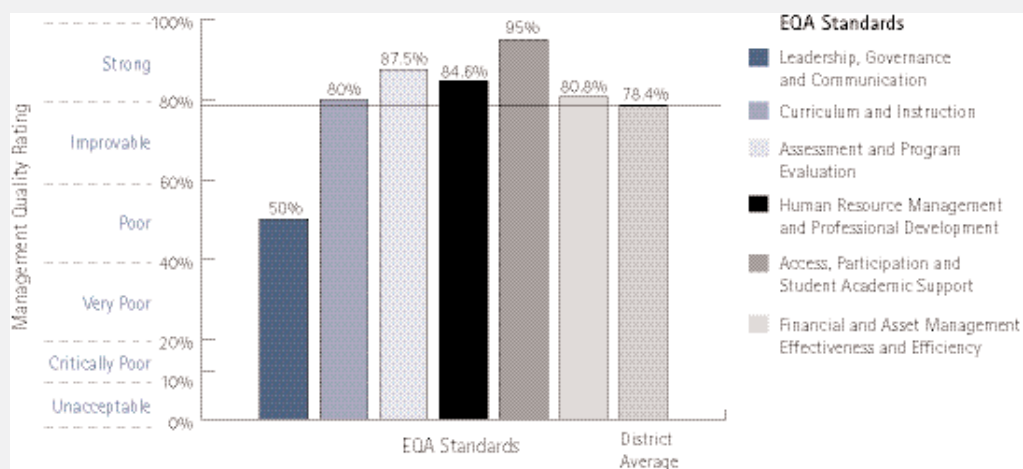
To better understand the factors affecting student scores on the MCAS tests, the EQA analyzes district performance on 67 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. Taken together, these factors are a

measure of the effectiveness – or quality – of a district's management system. A score of 100 percent on the Management Quality Index (MQI) means that the district meets the standard and performed at a satisfactory level on all indicators. However, it does not mean the district was perfect.

In 2006, Foxborough received an overall MQI score of 'Improvable' (78.4 percent). The district performed best on the Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support standard, scoring 'Strong.' It was rated 'Poor' on the Leadership and Governance standard. Given these ratings, the district is performing better than expected on the MCAS tests. During the review period, student performance improved slightly in ELA but declined slightly in math. On the following pages, we take a closer look at the district's performance in each of the six standards.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

*Foxborough, 2004–2006*



## Leadership, Governance, and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. As measured by MCAS test performance, Foxborough ranked among the 'High' performing school districts in the commonwealth, with scores that were 'Very High' in ELA and 'Moderate' in math.

### Leadership and Communication

The leadership of the Foxborough Public Schools consisted of the superintendent and the five-member school committee. The former superintendent resigned in the fall of 2006 due to philosophical differences with the school committee. During the period under review, nine of 10 administrators left the district. Many of these positions were filled permanently, but the district had limited continuity of administrative leadership. In spite of the turnover in school administration and the subsequent decline in teacher morale, the teachers in the district focused on the needs of the students, and student achievement remained high.

The superintendent hired new administrators to replace those who resigned or retired. Interviewees indicated they felt the district had administrative stability, although the present superintendent, who was formerly the assistant superintendent, served in an "acting" capacity in school year 2006-2007. The school committee sent administrators to the Center for Creative Leadership to learn and improve administrative skills to strengthen the district's administration for the future.

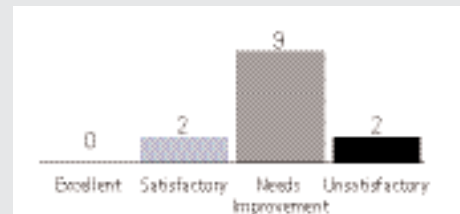
### Planning and Governance

The district recently began updating the strategic plan that expired in 1998 to create a new District Improvement Plan (DIP). The district began a process

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district was effective in data generation, gathering, and interpretation that resulted in data-driven decisions. Evidence existed that the district made some data-driven decisions based on analysis of student achievement.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district lacked an improvement plan; as a result, School Improvement Plans lacked direction, and they did not use a standards-based format that incorporated student achievement data to set goals and to promote continuous progress.
- The district did not use student achievement data to evaluate the superintendent or principals, nor did it assess the effectiveness of administrative leadership to raise student achievement.
- The district did not have a district safety and crisis management plan coordinated with the police and fire departments and aligned with school plans.

to create a DIP in April 2004 and hoped to finalize the DIP in the near future. Without a DIP to guide the district's strategy for improvement, the district did not set measurable goals related to student achievement data. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were in place at all schools, but only the one for the middle school was standards based and connected to student achievement results. Principals reported to the school committee on the progress of the goals in their respective SIPs. The district relied on practices and procedures without written guidelines and policies for many areas of the school system's administration. The district recently investigated eliciting assistance from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to update district policies.

School administrators gathered and interpreted student achievement data, and the district made some decisions based on these data. For instance, the school committee adopted a new reading curriculum for grades K-6 based on an English language arts (ELA) program review in 2005. In addition to program evaluations, evidence suggested that the district and schools used student achievement data to drive modifications in curriculum, programs, and instruction. The district used test data to institute MCAS remediation, to emphasize particular curriculum strands, and to offer SAT preparation courses. The school committee did not explicitly use student achievement data as a measure against which to evaluate the superintendent, nor did the superintendent use data when evaluating principals.

The district did not have a district safety and crisis management plan that was coordinated with the police and fire departments and aligned with the school plans. However, all schools in the district had safety plans as well as crisis management plans in place. The elementary schools had identical plans and the high school had a more extensive plan.

## Curriculum and Instruction

The Foxborough Public Schools performed effectively in the areas of curriculum development and instructional practice — essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

### Aligned Curricula

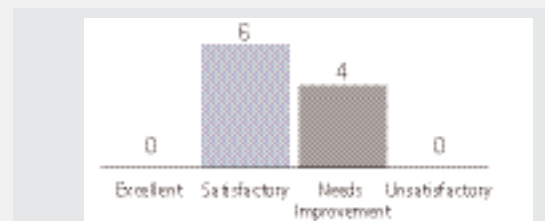
The district's curriculum documents addressed most components of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Work on curriculum during the period under review included development of grade-level benchmarks to address the lack of consistent measurable outcomes and assessments. The district had an established curriculum review process in place, but gaps occurred in the timing of reviews due to the large turnover in administrative positions during the review period.

The district analyzed data from the MCAS tests and other assessments and began a full review of the ELA program for grades K-6 in 2005-2006. The district modified the core ELA program and added to it over time. The district felt the core program itself needed strengthening. As a result, the district selected a new core reading program, Harcourt Brace Trophies, for implementation in 2006-2007. The mathematics program, Silver Burdett Ginn, 1997, was not aligned with the 2000 curriculum frameworks, but the district addressed this through compacting units and supplementing materials. The curriculum committee had reviewed the mathematics program in 2002-2003. Horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment, while addressed within the elementary, middle, and high school levels, was more tentative at transition points between schools. When K-8 curriculum directors were in place, the middle school curriculum had stronger articulation with the high school curriculum. The high school addressed curriculum work during the summer, as time was not provided for this during professional development days.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district had curricula in the core content areas that addressed the components of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.
- The district provided resources for the integration of technology into math teaching and learning at grades 7-12 through the purchase of graphing calculators for all math classes, and provided multiple technology tools.

### Areas for Improvement

- Horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment for grades K-12 was limited by gaps in the curriculum review process.
- The high school did not meet time on learning requirements due to student enrollment in study halls that had no curriculum and for which students received no grades.
- The district did not use assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction.
- The district did not have a consistent protocol for walk-throughs or a mechanism for providing feedback to improve instruction.

Principals were the curriculum leaders in the schools and received support from assistant principals, K-8 directors, and high school department heads.

The district used formal and informal classroom walk-throughs to monitor instruction and evaluate teacher effectiveness. However, protocols for walk-throughs and lesson plan formats were inconsistent. At the elementary level, principals looked for teachers working with individual students and using best practices. They expected to see the goals and objectives of the lesson clearly stated and that students understood them. At the high school, the principal's council, made up of the principal and department heads, met regularly to monitor teachers' implementation of the curriculum and their use of best practices. The district supported several professional development initiatives for middle school mathematics teachers. For example, some teachers took part in Discrete Mathematical Ideas (DMI) institutes to strengthen understanding of concepts and building activities. Another group took part in an Educational Development Center (EDC) lesson study program. These groups worked together to develop new lessons. Professional development also was provided when data revealed a need for staff to learn additional instructional strategies or models, such as that provided to for elementary teachers in guided reading.

### Effective Instruction

The district analyzed and used student assessment data to inform instruction, align curriculum, and develop additional program materials; however, it did not use assessment data to monitor teacher effectiveness. The EQA examiners reviewed a random sample of 38 teacher personnel files, which showed summative evaluations were informative but in general did not include recommendations for improvement. Elementary principals used data at staff meetings to address the modification and adjustment of curriculum. At the middle school and high school, the mathematics programs were adjusted to allow students who were not prepared to take a full-year Pre-Algebra course at grade 7 or a full-year Algebra I course at grade 9 to take the course over a two-year duration. Integrated mathematics courses were phased out and all grade 7 and 8 students took Pre-Algebra or Algebra I. Some special needs students were able to take alternative classes in the core content areas that taught the same curriculum at a slower pace.

The high school did not meet the DOE requirement of 990 hours of instructional time because the school placed some students in directed study classes that had no curriculum. The district provided teachers at all levels with technology for their use in the instructional process and in ELA, math, and science courses in which integration was evident.

## Assessment and Program Evaluation

Student assessment data include a wealth of information for district and school leaders on strengths and weaknesses in the local system, providing valuable input on where they should target their efforts to improve achievement.

### Student Assessment

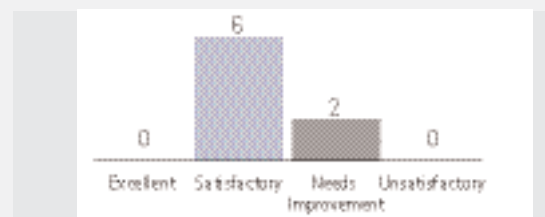
District and school leaders had put in place a comprehensive formative and summative assessment program by the end of the period under review. In addition to the MCAS tests, leaders and teachers monitored students' development of basic skills through the TerraNova test, administered to all students in grades 2-9, and the PSAT, required of all grade 10 students. Diagnostic literacy tests informed teachers and parents about reading readiness and literacy strengths and weaknesses at entry and in the early elementary years for both regular and special education students. Teachers administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in grades 1-4 to sustain diagnostic tracking of student reading abilities and to place students in appropriate reading groups or classes. At the middle school, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) provided additional information regarding students' literacy.

The district disaggregated and analyzed data from the formative and summative assessments to meet the particular needs of subgroups, such as the special education subgroup. These analyses led to the implementation of MCAS remediation programs offered during the school day and in the summer for students at all levels who were at risk of failing or who failed the MCAS tests, and the restructuring of math and science courses to better meet the needs of both more advanced and less advanced students. During district professional development days, teachers learned to administer and use the results of the DRA and to use data from standardized tests to drive instruction.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 8 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- District and school leaders communicated data and other pertinent information about student achievement to all appropriate staff members and the community in a timely manner.
- The district's students had high rates of participation on all assessments.
- In the last year of the review period, the district conducted a comprehensive internal review of the grade K-6 ELA program, and launched a new elementary ELA curriculum in 2006-2007.

### Areas for Improvement

- Internal program reviews to inform the effectiveness of academic programs during the review period were inconsistent due to leadership position turnover and vacancies and lack of program review procedures.

Although the district analyzed and used data gleaned from standardized tests as well as from classroom-based assessments, several impediments prevented an optimum analysis and use of data to improve student achievement. First, a number of critical leadership positions left unfilled during the early part of the review period delayed some analysis and implementation of improvement strategies, according to interviewees. Second, many classroom teachers did not fully use student achievement data to inform instruction and set student goals at all levels, according to a review of curriculum documents. Finally, without a DIP or standards-based SIPs, the use of achievement data to measure educational progress and modify curriculum and instruction was fragmented.

By the end of the review period, the district had restructured the schedule for its internal curriculum review cycle and had codified the procedures professional staff would use to conduct internal curriculum reviews. These revisions stemmed from a comprehensive curriculum review of the K-6 ELA program conducted in the last year of the review period. One result of that review was the implementation of a new reading program in the 2006-2007 school year. The district also performed a review of the elementary Spanish language program and its John Collins Writing Program. However, other curriculum reviews targeted for midway through the period under review did not take place, mainly due to vacancies in key academic leadership positions, according to interviewees.

### Program Evaluation

Several required external reviews took place during the review period, such as the Department of Education Coordinated Program Review (CPR) and a Title I review. In addition, high school professional staff submitted the two-year and five-year reports addressing recommendations from the re-accreditation report completed in 2001 by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). No other external reviews assessed the effectiveness of instructional or support programs. District and school leaders used information from internal and external audits and program reviews to improve instruction, prioritize goals, define professional development, allocate time and resources, and initiate or discontinue programs and services.

## Human Resource Management and Professional Development

To improve student academic performance, school districts must recruit certified teaching staff, offer teacher mentoring programs and professional development opportunities, and evaluate instructional effectiveness on a regular basis in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

### Hiring Practices and Certification

The district actively recruited candidates for teaching and administrative positions and had hiring procedures in place to establish an effective teaching force. The district advertised positions in *The Boston Globe* and on the district website and posted positions in the schools and central office. The district used a collaborative approach in hiring with applications vetted by principals and department chairs. The schools used interviewing committees, and the district formed interviewing committees when hiring administrators.

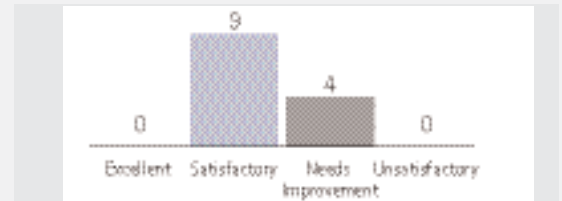
The district had low teacher turnover and interviewees speculated that selectivity in the hiring process produced low turnover. Teachers cited the mentor program, the five days of professional development, course reimbursement, the collegial environment, and in-house promotional opportunities as their incentives for working in the district.

Interviewees indicated that the district did not have any financial barriers to hiring teachers or administrators. The district provided licensure data to EQA examiners that indicated all but two teachers who were working on waivers and all administrators had the appropriate licensure. The central office tracked when staff licenses would expire and monitored the progress of staff members who were working toward licensure.

### Performance at a Glance

#### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



#### Areas of Strength

- The district had professional development and mentoring programs and funded them at appropriate levels. The district determined professional development needs based on the analysis of achievement data, teacher and program evaluations, and research-based practices.

#### Areas for Improvement

- The district did not evaluate administrators annually and hold them explicitly accountable for student achievement results. Also, administrators performed informal classroom walk-throughs, but did not have standardized evaluation protocols.



## Professional Development

The district had professional development and mentoring programs in place during the review period and funded them substantially. The mentoring program for teachers was a two-year program, and the district had trained approximately 100 mentors and provided them to all new teachers in the district, including those with experience in other districts. Principals assigned mentors based on recommendations from department chairs or the special education director and tried to assign mentors with roles similar to those of the new teachers. For struggling new teachers, the mentor and the teacher's supervisor recommended courses, professional development, and/or the observation of another teacher's class. No formal mentoring program was provided for district administrators, but administrators indicated that they had a strong, informal support system.

The district had a professional development team that coordinated professional development offerings in the district, and the district had five professional development days annually. Analysis of student achievement data, teacher evaluations, and research-based practices informed the professional development program, according to interviewees and a review of documents. For example, the district had trained many staff in TestWiz, and staff received training in the use of data associated with the TerraNova assessment. Workshops were also offered in instructional strategies for teachers using the John Collins Writing Program, for middle school math teachers, and for special education teachers. In FY 2004 through FY 2006, the district provided approximately \$470,000 for mentors, professional development, and tuition reimbursement.

## Evaluation

District administrators received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation methods, and teachers received training in The Skillful Teacher methods. The district did not hold administrators and teachers explicitly accountable for student achievement. Principals conducted regular and detailed formative classroom evaluations, but the protocols for the informal walk-throughs were not standardized. Interviewees indicated that staff conducting walk-throughs looked for things such as student engagement and higher order questioning. A review of 38 randomly selected teacher personnel files showed that evaluators did not conduct timely evaluations in 10 cases. Although many formative and summative teacher and administrative evaluations were performed, most in the sample reviewed by EQA examiners did not include recommendations for improvement. Interviewees indicated that evaluators provided oral feedback on what they saw in the classroom and had pre- and post-conferences with teachers and administrators who received evaluations.

## Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

Students who are at risk of failing or dropping out need additional support to ensure that they stay in school and achieve proficiency.

### Services

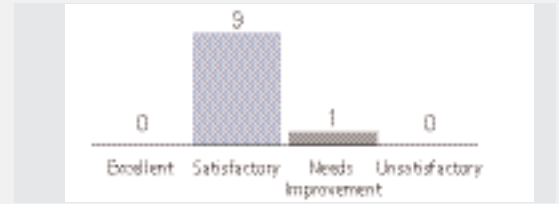
The district provided a range of academic services and supplementary programs to meet student needs and improve achievement. A comprehensive array of special education supports, including early intervention, after-school, and summer programs, were established or enhanced during the period under review. The district increased the use of formative and summative assessments to identify and/or remediate students performing below grade level. At the middle and high schools, courses were adjusted to provide academic levels appropriate to all learners. Both co-taught and alternative classes were offered for special education students to support them without the use of special education services. The district's historically low proportions of limited English proficient, transient, and homeless students had increased in the past few years, and a recent Department of Education Coordinated Program Review report acknowledged the district's efforts to serve these populations better. The district provided early intervention programs to help students attain proficiency on the grade 4 MCAS ELA test, and 69 percent of grade 4 students scored at or above the proficient level in 2006.

The district monitored student academic progress in order to provide interventions and supports when needed. Administrators, guidance staff, and special education personnel met each spring to discuss the needs of students transitioning from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school. As part of the district's curriculum review cycle, district and school leaders focused on course alignment and sequence in order to assist students in making successful transitions from grade to grade.

### Performance at a Glance

#### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



#### Areas of Strength

- The district made increased use of formative and summative assessments to identify students not meeting academic expectations.
- The district had provided early intervention programs in literacy. On the 2006 MCAS ELA test, 69 percent of grade 4 students attained proficiency and no students failed.

#### Areas for Improvement

- Over 13 percent of grade 6-12 students were chronically absent in 2005-2006, having missed at least 18 days of school.
- A review of data revealed that elementary and middle school special education subgroups failed to meet AYP in both ELA and math in both 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.
- The in-school suspension rate at the middle school almost doubled between 2004 and 2006. The high school, which did not utilize in-school suspension resources, reported that its out-of-school suspension rate rose from 2004 to 2006.

Although the district allowed students who did not meet qualifying criteria and prerequisites to select honors and Advanced Placement courses and encouraged them to do so, very few students from the three major subgroups (special education, low income, African-American) in the district enrolled in these classes. Consequently, subgroups were underrepresented in all higher-level academic programs throughout the period under review.

## Attendance

Attendance policies and practices were developed and monitored at the individual building levels and were informally coordinated among the district's three elementary schools. Excessive absences at the high school led to the loss of course credit, and students needed a prescribed number of course credits to be promoted to the next grade. Attendance rates for the district averaged 95.4 percent throughout the review period, almost two percentage points above the state average during the same period. The schools did not conduct systematic disaggregated analyses of student attendance data and were unaware of any subgroup anomalies or patterns of chronic absenteeism. A review of DOE attendance data showed spikes in chronic absenteeism, or missing at least 18 days of school, at grades 6, 7, 11, and 12, and 13.2 percent of students in grades 6-12 were chronically absent in 2005-2006. On average, all Foxborough students missed approximately 8.2 days of school in 2005-2006. School and district administrators monitored staff attendance during the period under review, and the district used substitute teachers as the primary method of assuring continuity of instruction. On average, teachers missed 9.8 days of school, excluding professional development days, in 2005-2006.

## Discipline and Dropout Prevention

The frequency of disciplinary infractions and suspensions within the district was relatively low throughout the period under review. Although suspension rates at both the middle school and the high school increased during the past three school years, they remained below state averages. Administrators reported that improvements to the structure and operation of building-based support teams, greater stability of building leadership after a period of high administrative turnover, and the addition of a second full-time assistant principal at the high school have all contributed to improvements in school climate, consistency of expectations, and enforcement of positive student behaviors.

A review of DOE dropout data indicated that 6.4 percent of students in the cohort that graduated in 2006 had dropped out.

## Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effective districts develop budgets based on student needs, submit financial documentation in a timely fashion, employ staff with MCPPO credentials, and ensure that their facilities are well maintained.

### Budget Process

The budget process for the period under review did not involve all stakeholders. During the period under review, the town directed the school district to level fund supplies and materials and to not add new positions. A bylaw existed in the town that required all departments to submit operating budgets on or before December 1 each year. The presentation of the budget to the school committee occurred in January. Budgets, once submitted, could only be reduced. Budget documents presented a clear, complete, and comprehensive picture of revenues and expenditures but lacked integration with the town. The district's financial accounting system used Excel spreadsheets, and the system lacked efficiency and appropriate data analysis capability and prevented the district from providing timely financial reports to the school committee.

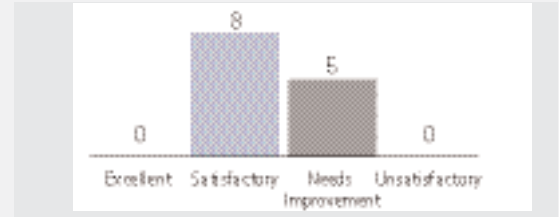
### Financial Support

The school district exceeded the net school spending (NSS) requirement each year for the period under review. Adequate funding during that time supported the school district's educational initiatives. In FY 2006, the district returned \$493,000 to the town. A review of financial support for the period under review revealed that although the district exceeded net school spending requirements, the percentage over the requirement declined each year. Although administrators expressed an inadequacy of funding, teachers stated they had sufficient supplies and materials.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Foxborough received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district developed a comprehensive maintenance plan for all schools and contracted with a consultant in 2001 to prepare maintenance manuals.
- The district formulated a five-year capital plan that the district reprioritized each year and incorporated into the town's capital plan.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district did not use student achievement data analysis in developing its budget.
- A review of net school spending (NSS) indicated the amount the district received in excess of NSS dropped from 20 to 16 percent during the review period, and to nine percent.
- The district lacked a written agreement with the town for determining indirect costs. The town finance director developed a cost analysis sheet for determining indirect costs, but the school committee had not discussed and approved it.

The district performed evaluation-based reviews to determine the cost effectiveness of its special education, cafeteria, and transportation programs. These reviews resulted in the return of out-of-district students and programs to the district, the adjustment of cafeteria prices, and the saving of \$22,000 by outsourcing transportation for the METCO program to a private contractor. The business manager had forecast mechanisms and control procedures in place to ensure spending was within fiscal limits.

### Facilities and Safety

Each school had a maintenance manual prepared by a consultant. The format of the manuals fulfilled the requirement of the Department of Education for a description of scheduled maintenance, a plan of administration, and a system of checks and requisite record keeping. The organization of the manuals included the site, the building envelope, the interiors of the building, and mechanical and electrical conditions. The school district developed a five-year capital plan in conjunction with the town. In FY 2005 and FY 2006, the district received \$670,000 and \$440,200, respectively, for capital improvements.

During walk-throughs, the EQA examiners found all schools to be clean, safe, well lit, and well maintained. The exterior doors to the schools were locked during the school day, including the main entrances which employed door buzzers, to promote the safety of the schools. Each school had an emergency team that met regularly to assess the safety of the school, to receive training, and to conduct safety drills with faculty and students; however, the training was based on individual, non-standardized school crisis and emergency plans since the district did not have a districtwide standard crisis and emergency plan.

## CONCLUSION

The Foxborough Public Schools was considered to be a 'High' performing district, marked by student achievement that was 'Very High' in ELA and 'Moderate' in math during the review period as measured by the MCAS tests. More than two-thirds of Foxborough's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests. The EQA gave the district a Management Quality Index rating of 'Improvable,' with the highest rating in Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support, and the lowest in Leadership and Governance.

The Foxborough Public Schools faced and survived a major challenge during the period under review. In 2004-2005, an investigation into allegations of the misuse of e-mail and other actions by administrators led to the retirement or resignation of nine administrators. Ultimately, no charges were filed, and the district reported the incident to the Massachusetts Department of Education. The former superintendent, who resigned in the fall of 2006 because of philosophical differences with the school committee, hired all of the administrators who retired or resigned. The present superintendent, formerly the assistant superintendent, was serving as the acting superintendent in school year 2006-2007, at the time of the EQA site visit. Interviewees indicated that morale suffered during this period of administrative turnover and turmoil. They also indicated that teachers "soldiered on" and student achievement in the district remained solid.

During the period under review, the district suffered from the lack of strategic leadership documents to drive district strategy and policy. For example, the district did not have a District Improvement Plan (DIP), a district crisis and emergency plan, or an updated school committee policy manual. The district did have School Improvement Plans (SIPs), but schools did not explicitly include measurable goals in the SIPs. All schools had school safety and crisis management plans, although they did not all include the same components. The district has developed and the school committee has approved a draft DIP, and the school committee was investigating the possibility of using the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to help it develop an updated manual. The district also developed a SIP for the middle school to serve as a model for use by other schools in the district.

Foxborough's curriculum documents addressed most of the components of the state curriculum frameworks. The curriculum was aligned horizontally and vertically but lacked cohesion at transition points between schools. Teachers at all levels had appropriate technology for student use, and they incorporated the use of that technology into their instructional practice. The district had a curriculum review cycle in place, although the administrative turnover

during the period under review hindered the implementation of some elements of that review. The district also undertook program reviews of its K-6 ELA program, its elementary Spanish language program, and its special education programs in order to improve the delivery of instruction and the achievement of students.

The district used a variety of formative and summative assessments to measure student achievement, to alter instruction, and to provide additional supports to students in need. The district provided early intervention for literacy, MCAS remediation classes, and course offerings that met the needs of both more advanced and struggling students. School leaders were trained in the analysis of student achievement data and disseminated and discussed the data with teachers at all levels. Student achievement data were not used to evaluate teachers, administrators, or the superintendent, and the goals in the SIPs were not based on student achievement data.

Despite the high administrative turnover that occurred in Foxborough during the period under review, the district experienced low teacher turnover. The district supported new teachers and teachers new to the district with an extensive two-year mentoring program. Supports were provided to struggling teachers, including courses, professional development, and the observation of other teachers' classes. Five professional development days were provided, and the offerings were based on student achievement data, teacher evaluations, and research-based practices. These offerings included use of assessment results to modify instruction, training in new programs such as the new K-6 reading curriculum, and training in math and special education strategies. Administrators received professional development in Research for Better Teaching evaluation methods and the use of TestWiz to analyze data.

Formal classroom observations and informal classroom walk-throughs provided the means for school leaders to evaluate teachers and monitor instruction. Teacher evaluations were informative, but most often were not instructive. Evaluators indicated that they provided oral feedback on these classroom visits to teachers.

In FY 2004, the district's budget was reduced from its FY 2003 level. In FY 2005 and FY 2006, the budget was level funded and the district was instructed to not add new positions. Administrators and teachers differed in their perceptions of whether the budget was adequate during the period under review. The district did exceed the required net school spending requirement for each year of the review period, but the percentage over the requirement decreased from year to year. Due to fiscal constraints imposed by the town, the district was hindered in making budgetary decisions based on student achievement data.

## APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

EQA's examination process provides successively deeper levels of information about student performance. All school districts receive an MCAS data review annually, but they do not all receive the full examination every year.

Based on the MCAS results, Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) policy, and random sampling, approximately 60 districts statewide received a site review. Still other districts – those that do not meet certain performance criteria set by the state Department of Education – received an even more detailed review.

### *Data-Driven Assessment*

Annually, the DOE and EQA's staff assess each public school district's results on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests to find out how students are performing. This review seeks to answer five basic questions:

1. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on MCAS?
2. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students (such as minority and low-income students and students with disabilities)?
3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?
4. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?
5. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

### *Standards-Based Examination*

Districts with MCAS results that fall within certain thresholds of performance, particularly districts that score below average, may be selected to receive a site review. This review seeks to provide a more complete picture of why the district is performing at that level, examining district management, planning, and actions and how they are implemented at the building level. It focuses in particular on whether the district uses data to inform its efforts.

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. EQA examines a total of 67 indicators to assess whether the district is meeting the standards and provides a rating for each indicator.



## APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN EQA REPORTS

**ABA:** Applied Behavioral Analysis

**ADA:** Average Daily Attendance

**ALT:** MCAS Alternative Assessment

**API:** Average Proficiency Index (of the English Language Arts Proficiency Index and Math Proficiency Index for all students)

**ATA:** Accountability and Targeted Assistance

**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress

**CAP:** Corrective Action Plan

**CBM:** Curriculum-Based Measures

**CD:** Competency Determination — the state's interim Adequate Yearly Progress indicator for high schools based on grade 10 MCAS test passing rates

**CMP:** Connected Math Program

**CORI:** Criminal Offender Record Information

**CPI:** Composite Proficiency Index — a 100-point index combining students' scores on the standard MCAS and MCAS Alternative Assessment (ALT)

**CPR:** Coordinated Program Review — conducted on Federal Education Acts by the DOE

**CRT:** Criterion-Referenced Test

**CSR:** Comprehensive School Reform

**DCAP:** District Curriculum Accommodation Plan

**DIBELS:** Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

**DIP:** District Improvement Plan

**DOE:** Department of Education

**DPDP:** District Professional Development Plan

**DRA:** Developmental Reading Assessment

**ELA:** English Language Arts

**ELL:** English Language Learners

**EPI:** English Language Arts Proficiency Index

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**FLNE:** First Language Not English

**FRL/N:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/No

**FRL/Y:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/Yes

**FTE:** Full-Time Equivalent

**FY:** Fiscal Year

**Gap Analysis:** A statistical method to analyze the relationships between and among district and subgroup performance and the standard of 100 percent proficiency

**GASB:** Government Accounting Standards Board

**GMADE:** Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation

**GRADE:** Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation

**GRADU:** The graduation yield rate for a class four years from entry

**IEP:** Individualized Education Program

**Improvement Gap:** A measure of change in a combination of the proficiency gap and performance gap between two points in time; a positive improvement gap will show improvement and convergence between subgroups' performance over time

**IPDP:** Individual Professional Development Plan

**IRIP:** Individual Reading Improvement Plan

**ISSP:** Individual Student Success Plan

**LASW:** Looking at Student Work

**LEP:** Limited English Proficient

**MASBO:** Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials

**MASC:** Massachusetts Association of School Committees

**MASS:** Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

**MAVA:** Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators

**MCAS:** Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

**MCAS-Alt:** Alternative Assessment — a portfolio option for special needs students to demonstrate proficiency

**MCPPPO:** Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official

**MELA-O:** Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral

**MEPA:** Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment

**MPI:** Math Proficiency Index

**MQI:** Management Quality Index — an indicator of the relative strength and effectiveness of a district's management system

**MUNIS:** Municipal Information System

**NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind

**NEASC:** New England Association of Schools and Colleges

**NRT:** Norm-Referenced Test

**NSBA:** National School Boards Association

**NSS:** Net School Spending

**Performance Gap:** A measure of the range of the difference of performance between any subgroup's Proficiency Index and another subgroup's in a given district

**PI:** Proficiency Index — a number between 0–100 representing the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency

**PIM:** Performance Improvement Management

**POA:** Program Quality Assurance — a division of the DOE responsible for conducting the Coordinated Program Review process

**Proficiency Gap:** A measure of a district or subgroup's Proficiency Index and its distance from 100 percent proficiency

**QRI:** Qualitative Reading Inventory

**Rate of Improvement:** The result of dividing the gain (improvement in achievement as measured by Proficiency Index points) by the proficiency gap

**SAT:** A test administered by the Educational Testing Service to 11th and 12th graders

**SEI:** Sheltered English Immersion

**SIMS:** Student Information Management System

**SIOP:** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

**SIP:** School Improvement Plan

**SPED:** Special Education

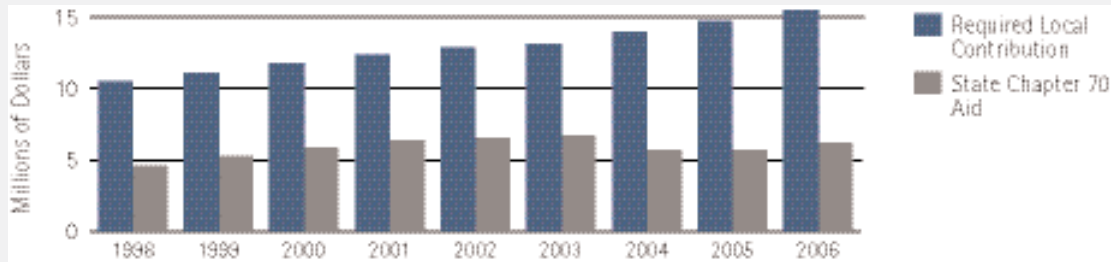
**STE:** Science and Technology/Engineering

**TerraNova:** K–12 norm-referenced test series published by CTB/McGraw-Hill

## APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1998–2006

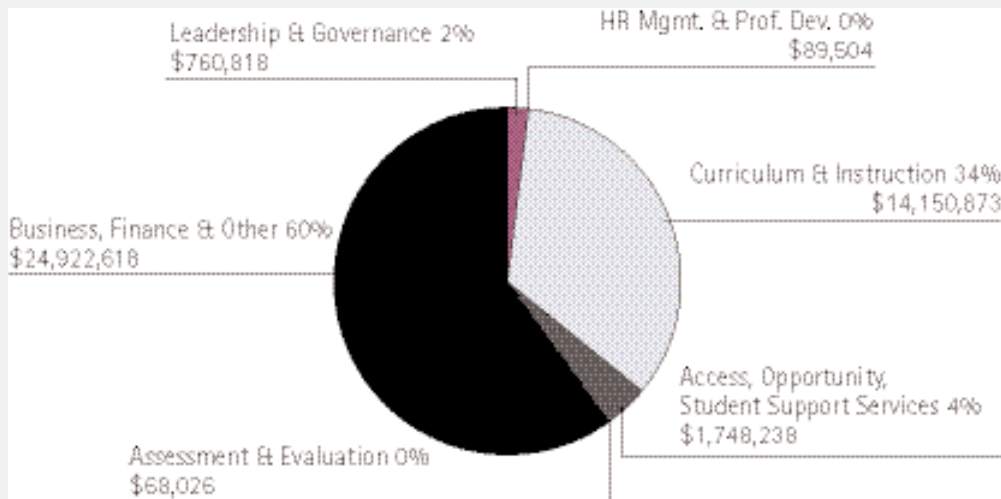
A school district's funding is determined in part by the Chapter 70 program — the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to supporting school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of Foxborough's funding that was derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute. The district exceeded the state net school spending (NSS) requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, NSS increased from \$23,611,861 to \$25,125,163; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$5,687,603 to \$6,200,106; the required local contribution increased from \$13,945,345 to \$15,487,944; and the foundation enrollment increased from 2,880 to 2,964. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual NSS increased from 24 to 25 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total Schedule 1 NSS reported in the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report decreased from 64 to 61 percent.

### WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR FOXBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



### HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR FOXBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

FY05 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges)





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